



# WHY WE LEARN THE ARABIC LANGUAGE

AN ESSAY ON THE MANIFOLD IMPORTANCE OF THE ARABIC  
LANGUAGE CONSIDERED FROM THE VIEW-POINT OF ISLAMIC  
RELIGION, SEMITIC PHILOLOGY, ROMANCE PHILOLOGY,  
BIBLICAL STUDIES, HISTORY OF SCIENCE AND CIVILIZATION,  
JEWISH AND CHRISTIAN LIFE, ETC.

by

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## PREFATORY NOTE

SEVERAL distinguished scholars in the past have felt impelled for various reasons to demonstrate the importance of Arabic language and literature. Each of them has naturally viewed the subject according to his own lights, in response to the needs of his own particular age and country. William Bedwell (1561-1632), the father of Arabic studies in England, was probably the first English Orientalist to deal with the subject. He wrote an excellent essay, in which he showed the importance of Arabic and emphasized the urgent need of its study as the language of a great religion. He also stressed its importance as the language of administration and commerce throughout the Arabic world ; and besides referred to its literary and scientific value. Edmund Castell (1606-1685), one of the earliest professors of Arabic at Cambridge and the author of the first Comparative Lexicon of Semitic Languages, also wrote on the value of Arabic studies. Similarly Edward Pococke (1604-1691) the first professor of Arabic at Oxford, began his course of lectures there in 1636 with a discourse on the importance of Arabic language and literature. The eminent Dutch Orientalist, Albert Schultens (1686-1750) stressed one particular aspect of Arabic studies. In his dissertation on the ' Use of Arabic in the Interpretation of Scripture ' (1706), he showed how Biblical phraseology and mode of thought could be illustrated by reference to the language and literature of the Arabs.

Coming down to our own times, we find that Sir Thomas Arnold (1864-1930) in a public lecture, delivered by him at the School of Oriental Studies, London, in March 1917, emphasised the need of an impartial study of Islam in view of the large number of Muslims in the British Empire, and showed that Islam and the Islamic world could not be properly understood without an adequate knowledge of Arabic, which is indispensable for 'any understanding of the thoughts that sway the lives of Muhammadan peoples, of the beliefs that they hold most sacred, and the principles of theology and ethics on which they are nurtured.'

With the exception of Dr. Arnold's lecture, almost all the other writings mentioned above are now out of print; and being extremely rare have been inaccessible to me here in India, while I was engaged on the present Essay, which has grown out of a 'paper,' which I read on the "Importance of the Arabic Language" before the Panjab University Arabic and Persian Society in February 1938, and which was subsequently published in *Islamic Culture* (Hyderabad), vol. xii (1938), pp. 277-87. The intrinsic interest and importance of the subject induced several competent scholars to take notice of the paper in its published form, and express their generous appreciation of the modest effort I had made on behalf of Arabic studies. My special thanks in this connection are due to Professor H. A. R. Gibb (Oxford University), Fräulein Dr. Ilse Lichtenstädter (New York), Dr. Muhammad Hamidullah (Osmania University), and Professor Dr. Husain F. al-Hamdani (Bombay University), who were good enough to

favour me with their critical remarks and call my attention to a number of errors which had somehow crept into my writing. I was able to benefit by their criticism in the preparation of an amplified Urdu version of my 'paper,' which appeared in the *Supplement to the Oriental College Magazine* (Lahore) for February, 1942.

The sympathetic interest which learned friends far and near were good enough to display in my paper, has been a source of deep gratification to me, and has encouraged me to pursue the subject further. I venture to hope that my inquiry has yielded some interesting results, and has brought to light certain aspects of the importance of Arabic language and literature, which I am afraid have not hitherto received due emphasis. The average educated man has a hazy notion that Arabic is important as the scriptural language of the Muslims; but beyond this he seems to know very little about it. I have tried to show that Arabic, though it started on its world-wide career as the language of uncouth Bedouins, grew into the vehicle of the brilliant Islamic civilisation; and that whereas it is primarily important as the religious language of the Muslims, it has in course of time developed many other aspects of great significance, which entitle it to our serious study. It has been my endeavour to put the whole subject upon a sound, scientific basis. As for the result, I leave it to the judgment of the discerning reader. The foot-notes which I have added will, I hope, help the student to pursue some of the topics discussed here still further; they will at the same time also indicate some of the sources I have tapped in the course of



my inquiry.

My object in publishing the present Essay has been to call the attention of my fellow-students as well as that of the general reader to the manifold value of Arabic for both humanist and scientific studies; and to help to form a body of well-informed public opinion in favour of its study. I shall be grateful for any helpful criticism or suggestions which kind readers may care to send to me regarding the subject-matter of this Essay.

I feel it is my duty to thank my Printers for the minute care they have given to the printing of this booklet which presented some typographical difficulties, and for the unusual promptness with which they have executed the task entrusted to them.

I am sending out this little book into the world in the hope that it may make many friends for itself as well as for me.

*Government College,  
Lahore :  
July 1st, 1942.*

SH. INAYATULLAH

# WHY WE LEARN THE ARABIC LANGUAGE

## ARABIC A LIVING LANGUAGE

CONSIDERED from the point of view of philology as well as general human culture, the Arabic language is one of the most important languages of the world. Next to English and Spanish, it is the third most widely spoken language of the globe in the extent of its geographical distribution. The Arab conquests of the 7th and 8th centuries and the subsequent Arabo-Islamic cultural influences carried the Arabic language to the most distant countries outside Arabia; and in one form or another it is spoken (sometimes along with other minor languages) in Mesopotamia, Syria, Palestine, Egypt, Malta, North Africa, and in certain districts further south, *e.g.*, in the Sudan, Nigeria, the Western Sahara and Zanzibar. In most of these lands, Arabic is the language of religion, literature, administration and commerce. Arabic was formerly spoken in Spain, which made very important contributions to Arabic literature,<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Not to mention al-Maqqarī's great and well-known work, *Nafh al-Tib*, which is our principal source for the literary history of Muslim Spain, I may refer the interested reader to the invaluable and unique monograph of the Spanish Orientalist, Prof. Gonzalez Palencia, entitled *Historia de la Literatura Arabigo-Española* (Barcelona, 1928), which surveys the whole field of Arabic literature produced in Muslim Spain and incorporates the results of the latest researches of the modern school of Spanish Arabists. The work is under translation by the present writer.

in the Balearic islands and Sicily,<sup>1</sup> in the island of Pantelleria and in Madagascar.

It is true that even in Arabia itself, the Arabic language shows dialectic differences; and such variations are still more marked in countries remote from the land of its origin; but the written language, the language of literature and journalism, has invariably conformed to the old standard type, which has been conveniently called Classical Arabic (عربي فصيح), characterized by an extraordinary richness of vocabulary and the logical, systematic character of its grammatical structure. Although Classical Arabic has passed through various stages of development, vocabulary and forms of expression have undergone considerable modifications, in accordance with the demands of a progressive civilization and the special needs of different branches of knowledge, it would still be correct to say that the grammatical structure of the language, as written by educated persons in the Arabic world to-day, is essentially the same as that of the language of the Qur'ān and the ancient Arabic poets. It will thus be seen that whereas its rich literature places the Arabic language among the principal literary languages of the world, it is at

<sup>1</sup> The Arabs ruled over Sicily and parts of southern Italy for about two hundred years; though their cultural influence endured long after the end of their political power. For the Arabic writers and poets who flourished in Sicily, the reader may consult A. F. von Schack, *Poesie und Kunst der Araber in Spanien und Sicilien*, 2 vols. (2nd ed., Stuttgart, 1877); Michele Amari, *Storia dei Musulmani di Sicilia*, 2nd edition revised and enlarged by Carlo Nallino, 3 vols. (Catania, 1933-38); Saiyid Riyāsāt 'Alī, *Tārīkh Siqilliya* (in Urdu), 2 vols. (Azamgarh, 1933-36); and the relevant sections in Carl Brockelmann, *Geschichte der Arabischen Litteratur*.

the same time an important living language of mankind, living not only in its influence on the minds of men but as a widely spoken language, which is in use, in one form or another, over a large part of the world, from the banks of the Tigris to the shores of the Atlantic.<sup>1</sup>

### ARABIC AS THE RELIGIOUS LANGUAGE OF THE MUSLIMS

Arabic is of supreme importance as the religious language of the Muslims, who constitute about one-fifth of the human race. The Qur'ān and the Traditions of the Prophet, which are the two main fountain-heads of the religious and cultural life of Islam, are in Arabic. The same remark applies to their numerous satellite disciplines. Translations into other languages, however painstaking and accurate, cannot be of much use in a first-hand study of Islamic faith and civilization. Any serious student of religious history who desires to specialize in the study of Islam and wants to understand the religious character of the Muslim society must learn Arabic. Religion enters into the daily life of the Muslims to such a great extent that even those peoples, with whom Arabic is not the mother-tongue, become more or less familiar with the Arabic language through religious usages and ceremonial. Again and again in the Qur'ān is emphasis

<sup>1</sup> On the present distribution of the Arabic-speaking peoples and the centres of Arab cultural influence, see the exceedingly valuable study of Prof. Louis Massignon, *Éléments Arabes et Foyers d'Arabisation: Leur Rôle dans le Monde Musulman Actuel*, in *Revue du Monde Musulman*, vol. lvii (1924), pp. 1-157.

laid on the fact that the Word of God has been revealed in the Arabic language; and from one end of the Muslim world to the other, whatever may be the living speech of the people—whether it be Berber, Hausa, Pashto, Persian, Turkish, Urdu, Javanese or Malay—prayers are everywhere repeated five times a day in Arabic; the faithful greet one another in familiar Arabic phrases; and the sacred text, though translated into many other languages, is read in the original Arabic. The Arabic words of the Islamic creed (*Lā ilāha ill' Allāh; Muḥammad Rasūl Allāh*) are whispered in the ear of the newborn babe; these are among the first sentences the growing child is taught to utter; and these should be the last words on the lips of the dying. In non-Arabic countries, Arabic may be a foreign tongue; but it is studied there by all the learned, and the learned ('*Ulamā'*') constitute whatever clergy Islam possesses, and from them the unlettered multitudes derive their knowledge of their faith and, incidentally, some familiarity with the language which is indissolubly associated with that faith.

The knowledge of the Arabic language is also indispensable for any serious student of religious history, who desires to specialize in the study of Islam, wants to understand properly the religious basis of the Muslim society and fathom its motive-springs. Not only its religious code (the Qur'ān) and the Apostolic Traditions (*Ḥadīth*) are in Arabic; but the numerous auxiliary religious sciences also were at first redacted in that language. Translations into other languages, however painstaking and accurate, cannot be of much use in a

first-hand study of Islamic faith and of the society that is nurtured on it. The religion of Islam claims to speak with authority in the domain of law, politics and social organization as much as in the sphere of theology and ethics; so that religious considerations enter into the individual and corporate life of the Muslims to a greater extent than is perhaps the case with any other community on the surface of the earth. Islam has, accordingly, been justly described as a Church-State, that is a state whose very constitution is ecclesiastical, in which the Church comes first and the State rests upon it. And here comes in the importance of Arabic. Without Arabic, Islam would be only imperfectly intelligible. For any understanding of the thoughts that sway the lives of the Muslims, of the beliefs they hold most sacred and the principles of theology and ethics in which they are brought up, we must have recourse to Arabic, which is the original and main repository of all the religious sciences of Islam.<sup>1</sup>

## ARABIC AN INTERNATIONAL LANGUAGE

Besides the religious aspect of the importance of Arabic, the written language is also of the utmost value to the Muslims of the world as a great cultural link and medium of communication among them.

<sup>1</sup> In demonstrating the importance of Arabic as the religious language of Islam, I have freely drawn upon the public lecture delivered by my revered master, the late Professor Sir Thomas Arnold, at the School of Oriental Studies, London, on March 14th, 1917. It was later published in the Bulletin of the said School, vol. I, pp. 106-117, under the heading of "The Study of Arabic."

Islam gives to every believer the sense of common fellowship in its universal brotherhood. Next in importance to the faith of Islam comes Arabic as an instrument, as well as a symbol and expression of whatever measure of unity and corporate feeling at present exists among the far-flung Muslim populations of the world. Arabic is studied more or less extensively in all the Muslim lands,<sup>1</sup> and it lies with the Muslims themselves to strengthen this bond of union by promoting the study of Arabic among them with greater zeal than is the case at present. The international character and position of Arabic is a fact that is, indeed, pregnant with great possibilities, only if the Muslims realized it and seized the opportunities that lie in this direction.

As I have already pointed out, classical Arabic is the language of literature and journalism in all the Arabic-speaking countries, from Iraq in the east to Morocco in the west; and despite a few minor local peculiarities, it serves the purpose of a common language throughout the Arab world. It also serves as an international language throughout the various lands of Islam, where it is studied more or less widely, chiefly from religious motives. The peoples of the various Arabic countries, however, make use of different dialects of Arabic in their everyday conversation. Whether any of these dialects will succeed in developing an independent literature of its own, seems highly improbable. Attempts have been made on behalf of Egyptian

<sup>1</sup> I leave out of account the numerous seats of learning in non-Muslim countries, where Arabic is studied for political, commercial, missionary or scientific purposes.

Arabic for more than a century ; but they have been of a sporadic nature. A few enthusiasts have produced books in the Egyptian dialect ; but they have been frowned upon by the learned, and have received little encouragement from those for whom they were intended. Certain European Orientalists have also sought to persuade the Arabs to develop these dialects into literary languages in place of the classical Arabic. These suggestions have not been received with favour, since such a development is fraught with grave danger to the literary and cultural unity of the Arabic world. Speaking at the International Congress of Orientalists held at Athens in 1912, an Egyptian representative strongly disapproved of such a regional development, saying : " You Westerners try to facilitate your mutual relations with the aid of artificial auxiliary languages, such as Volapuk, Esperanto and Ido ; and you ask us to throw away a magnificent and perfect instrument for the exchange of thought that is already serving 200 million individuals ! We shall show that we are better advised."

#### ARABIC AS THE CORNER-STONE OF SEMITIC PHILOLOGY

The study of Arabic has also proved of immense value in Semitic philology. In all probability, Arabia was the original home of the Semites, and it was from that land that the various Semitic peoples emerged in different periods of history to settle in Babylonia, Syria, Palestine, Egypt and Ethiopia. According to this theory, which has found wide



acceptance among competent scholars, Arabia is also regarded as the centre of distribution of the Semitic languages, and Arabic is, therefore, generally allowed to be nearer akin than any of its sister languages to the original archetype, the *Ursemitisch*, from which they are all derived. Although Arabic may not actually represent the proto-Semitic, for it has evidently passed through certain changes; it has nevertheless been free from the more violent changes, which have taken place, for example, in Assyrian and Hebrew as a result of the clash of different nations and cultures. The comparatively isolated position of Arabia has saved its language from contamination by non-Semitic languages; while the absence of any large number of aliens has also tended to preserve it from a too rapid change or any extensive corruption. In view of these facts, Arabic is justly regarded as the corner-stone of Semitic philology.

Moreover, the vocabulary of Arabic is much more copious than that of any other cognate language; and thanks to the diligence of the Arabic philologists of the early centuries of Islam—it has been preserved and illustrated in its usage with a thoroughness which has been applied to few other languages of the world. In modern times, therefore, there has been constant recourse to Arabic for the explanation of rare words and expressions in other Semitic languages. These considerations have rightly made Arabic a basis for the comparative study of these languages, in respect of their grammatical structure as well as their vocabulary.

## VALUE OF ARABIC FOR BIBLICAL STUDIES

The knowledge of Arabic language and Arabian life has proved of great value in Biblical studies also. "Since the beginning of the nineteenth century there has been constant recourse to Arabic for the explanation of rare words and forms in Hebrew; for Arabic, though more than a thousand years the junior as a literary language, is the senior philologically by countless centuries. Perplexing phenomena in Hebrew can often be explained as solitary and archaic survivals of forms which are frequent and common in the cognate Arabic. Words and idioms whose precise sense had been lost in Jewish tradition, receive a ready and convincing explanation from the same source. Indeed, no serious student of the Old Testament can afford to dispense with a first-hand knowledge of Arabic. The pages of any critical commentary on the Old Testament will illustrate the debt that Biblical exegesis owes to Arabic."<sup>1</sup>

The Dutch Orientalist, Albert Schultens (1686-1750), had already recognized in the 18th century the value and necessity of Arabic language and Arabian mode of thought in the interpretation of the Old Testament. In his dissertation on 'the Use of Arabic in the Interpretation of Scripture' (1706) he explained those principles of Biblical exegesis, which he himself so successfully and strikingly applied in his *Liber Jobi*.<sup>2</sup>

The Hebrews were after all an off-shoot of the

<sup>1</sup> Alfred Guillaume in his Preface to *The Legacy of Islam* (Oxford, 1931), p. ix.

<sup>2</sup> See the *Encyclopædia Britannica* (11th edition), *sub voce* Schultens.

Semitic stock, the cousins of the Arabs, who had migrated from the northern deserts of Arabia into Palestine about 1400-1200 B.C. ; and had kept up their pastoral mode of life and outlook for a considerable period of time. It is, therefore, only natural to expect that all that is true of Arabian life, character and thought is eminently fitted to illustrate Hebrew life and mental outlook, especially in its primitive conditions. The influence of Arabist scholars in the interpretation of the Bible has, therefore, been most remarkable ; and the work of Edward Pococke and W. Robertson Smith in England and of Julius Wellhausen in Germany, who have illuminated the Scriptures from the Arabian point of view, is consequently invested with an abiding interest and value.

### ARABIC LANGUAGE AND THE JEWS

The Arabic language has not only proved of great value in the interpretation of the scriptures of the Hebrews ; but the Hebrews or rather the Jews, as they came to be called in later times, had great deal to do with the Arabic language during the Middle Ages.

The precise period of the first settlement of Jews in Arabia is not known ; and it is therefore impossible to say when the Arabic language was first employed by them. The historical data, concerning the Jews of Arabia, do not reach farther back than the first century of the Christian era ; but, judging by the important position they occupied in some parts of Arabia, it may be safely con-

cluded that they must have been settled in the country for a considerable time past. Among the pre-Islamic poets there were a number of Jews; and a certain Sarah, a Jewess, is reported to have composed some Arabic verses, in which she poured forth her natural grief at the fate of her tribe, Quraiza.<sup>1</sup> A Jewish chief, named al-Samau'al, made himself famous by his loyalty as well as his poetry; so that the Arabs to this day use the phrase, "as loyal as al-Samau'al," to express unswerving fidelity.

When the Arabs established their dominion over a large part of the civilized world in the seventh century of the Christian era, and the Jews, along with other subject races, gradually came under the influence of Arabic culture, they readily adopted the language of the conquerors, and from Baghdad in the east to Morocco and Spain in the west, they spoke and wrote Arabic in all its various forms. In course of time, Arabic became a second mother-tongue with the Jews of the Arabo-Islamic world, so that rabbis and scholars, who desired to be understood by the masses of their community, were compelled to write in Arabic. In Toledo, for instance, where the Jews had been thoroughly assimilated by the general population in language and customs, the minutes of the religious congregations were kept in Arabic. The Jews not only translated their religious and theological books into Arabic; but they also wrote in it upon all conceivable subjects.<sup>2</sup> Saadia, Judah ha-Levi, Maimonides, Ibn Ezra

<sup>1</sup> Th. Nöldeke, *Beiträge zur Kenntniss der Poesie der alten Araber*, p. 54.

<sup>2</sup> For further details, see Neubauer's article, 'Non-Hebrew Languages used by Jews,' in the *Jewish Quarterly Review*, vol. iv., p. 9 *et seq.*

and many other eminent Jewish scholars of the Middle Ages wrote in pure Arabic. A very considerable part of the Jewish literature of the Middle Ages is in the Arabic language; and anyone who desires to have a first-hand knowledge of the literary production of the Hebrew genius during those ages, must have recourse to Arabic. A fairly good idea of the many beautiful literary relics, which Jewish authors have left in Arabic, may be had from the excellent writings of Moritz Steinschneider.<sup>1</sup>

The adoption of the Arabic language by the Jews, living in Muslim countries, had a distinctly salutary effect upon the Hebrew tongue. The Arabs attached great importance to the correct use of their language; and thus the Jews, who naturally entertained a deep love for the language of their scriptures, were induced to turn their attention to the deplorable state into which their sacred language had fallen. They set about polishing it, subjected it to a careful grammatical analysis, and then created a grammar for it, which was modelled after that of the Arabic. For instance, the grammar of Rabbi David Qimhi (died about 1235 A.C.), which exercised a profound influence on the subsequent study of Hebrew among Christians, borrows a great deal from Arabic sources.

Moreover, Hebrew poetry which in the seventh century resembled nothing so much as a lyre with broken strings—it was without rhyme or metre—came under the influence of the study of Arabic

<sup>1</sup> Moritz Steinschneider, *Die Arabische Literatur der Juden*. (Frankfurt am Main, 1902). See also his 'Introduction to the Arabic Literature of the Jews,' in the *Jewish Quarterly Review*, vols. ix-xiii.

poetry and began to assume elegant rhythmic forms, and soon rivalled the latter in sonorousness and polish.<sup>1</sup> In the words of Professor MacDonald, "the Hebrews remained Arabs....Their literature,through-out all their history and to this day, in its method of production and its recorded forms, is of Arab scheme and type....When the literature of the Hebrews is to be considered as to the literary types which it contains, the key is to be found in the far wider Arabic literature."<sup>2</sup>

#### ARABIC STUDIES AMONG JEWISH ORIENTALISTS

The Jewish literature of the Middle Ages developed under the direct influence of the superior and more progressive Arabic literature; while Muslim theology and philosophy exercised a deep influence upon Jewish thought. As a consequence, a close relationship came to subsist between the Jewish and Arabo-Islamic literatures; and the Jewish scholars who were engaged in the study of their own literature were easily and naturally led to the study of Arabic literature, which had furnished inspiring models in many branches of secular and religious learning. This will explain the comparatively large number of Jewish scholars among the European Orientalists, and the important rôle which they have played in the prosecution of Arabic and Islamic

<sup>1</sup> I. Broyde in the *Jewish Encyclopædia*, vol. ii., p. 50. (New York, 1901.)

<sup>2</sup> D. B. MacDonald, *The Hebrew Literary Genius*, p. xxvi (Princeton, 1933.)

studies. David Chwolson, James Darmesteter, Hartwig Derenbourg, Eduard Glaser, Ignaz Goldziher, Joseph Halevy, Hartwig Hirschfeld, Josef Horowitz, Gottlieb Leitner, Salomon Munk, D. H. Müller, Moritz Steinschneider, Gustav Weil were all Jews. Among the prominent living Jewish Arabists, we may mention G. Levi della Vida, E. Levi-Provençal, Eugen Mittwoch, Paul Kraus and Reuben Levy; and among young promising scholars, Martin Plessner, S. D. F. Goitein, S. Pines and Gustav von Grunebaum, besides Fräulein Dr. Ilse Lichtenstädter, a young lady from Frankfurt a. M. and a former pupil of Dr. J. Horowitz, who has already made her mark as an Arabist.<sup>1</sup> It may be further added that several eminent Orientalists, such as Chwolson, Sachau and Reckendorf, who professed Christianity, were converts from the Jewish faith. The late Prof. D. S. Margoliouth, though himself a Christian, probably had a Jewish ancestry.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The chief works which Dr. Lichtenstädter has so far published are: *Das Nasīb der altarabischen Qasīde*, published in *Islamica* (Leipzig), vol. v.; *Women in the Aiyām al-'Arab*, a study of Female Life during Warfare in pre-Islamic Arabia (The Royal Asiatic Society Prize Publication Fund, London, 1935); an edition of Muḥammad ibn Ḥabīb's *Kutāb al-Muḥabbar*; besides a large number of valuable articles, too numerous to mention here, which have appeared in the *Encyclopædia of Islam* and in several learned journals of Europe, America and India.

<sup>2</sup> The name Margoliouth, which occurs also as Margaliot, Margolis, Margulies and in various other forms, was originally borne by a Polish family of Talmudic scholars, who traced their descent from Rashi on the one side, and from the families of Shor and Samuel Edels on the other. The first Margoliouth to gain prominence was Samuel, who was *dayyan* at Posen about 1550. One of his sons, Moses Mordecai, was rabbi at Cracow. There are numerous scholars bearing the name of Margoliouth, whose relationship to this family, though probable, cannot be determined with accuracy. See the *Jewish Encyclopædia*, vol. viii, p. 327, *sub voce*.

## GREEK AUTHORS IN ARABIC TRANSLATIONS

During the Golden Age of Islam, the enlightened Caliphs of Baghdad and their nobles had caused the works of a host of Greek authors to be translated into Arabic. In this way, a large number of Greek works on philosophy, medicine, mathematics, astronomy, mechanics, music, geography and history made their appearance in the Arabic language. Now, these translations, some of which have been fortunately preserved, have been instrumental in restoring some of the lost glories of the ancient Greek world; since there is a number of Greek authors, whose works have been lost in their original form, but have been preserved in Arabic. This is a service for which we cannot be too grateful to the Arabs. The works of this character that have so far been discovered and have come to the knowledge of the present writer, are:—

1. Three sections of the *Conics* (*Kitāb al-Makhrūṭāt*) of Apollonius of Perga. We learn from the *Fihrist* of Ibn al-Nadīm (Cairo edition, p. 373) that it was already rare when translated into Arabic, and that the 8th section had in large part been lost.

2. The *Spherics* (*Kitāb al-Aṣhkāl al-Kuriyyah*) of Menelaus of Alexandria.<sup>1</sup>

3. The *Mechanics* (*Kitāb al-'Ālāt*) of Hero of Alexandria.

4. The *Pneumatics* (*Kitāb al-Hawā'*) of Philo of Byzantium.

5. A treatise of Euclid on the balance (*Mīzān*),

<sup>1</sup> Cf. M. Krause, *Die Sphärik von Menelaos aus Alexandrien in der Verbesserung von Abu Naṣr Maṣṣūr bin Aḥī bin Iraq*. Berlin, 1936.



which has been edited and published by Wöpcke in the *Journal Asiatique* (1851), p. 27.

6. A book on *Clepsydra* (*Sā'āt al-Mā'*), attributed to Archimedes.<sup>1</sup>

7. The *Geoponique* (*Kitāb Falāḥat al-Ard*) of Anatolius of Berytos.<sup>2</sup>

8. A number of the medical writings of Galen.<sup>3</sup>

9. *Optica* (*Kitāb al-Manāzir wa 'l-Marāyā*), attributed to Ptolemy.

10. *Oekonomikos* of Bryson, studied by M. Plessner.

11. A treatise on morals by Themistius, probably preserved in al-Kindi's *Risāla fī 'l-ḥīla li-daf' al-Aḥzān*.<sup>4</sup>

The Arabic translations of Greek authors can also afford invaluable help to scholars in the critical study of extant Greek texts; for they date from a period earlier than that of the oldest existing Greek manuscripts; and reference to them is bound to prove helpful in fixing the original Greek texts.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Baron Carra de Vaux in *The Legacy of Islam*, p. 376 (Oxford, 1931.)

<sup>2</sup> P. Spath, *L'ouvrage Geoponique d' Anatolius de Berytos*, in *Bulletin de l'Institut d'Egypte*, XIII (1930-31), pp. 47-54.

<sup>3</sup> Franz Pfaff, *Die nur arabisch erhaltenen Teile der Epidemienkommentare des Galen und die Überlieferung des Corpus Hippocraticum* (Sitzungsberichte der Preuss. Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1931, pp. 558-81). See also H. Ritter und R. Walzer, *Arabische Übersetzungen griechischer Ärzte in Stambuler Bibliotheken* (Sitzungsberichte d. Preuss. Ak. d. Wissen., 1934, p. 801 et seq.)

<sup>4</sup> H. Ritter und R. Walzer, *Uno scritto morale inedito di al-Kindi* (Themistio?) *Rendiconti d. R. Accad. nazionale dei Lincei* (1938), VIII, p. 62.

<sup>5</sup> It is a highly interesting phenomenon in the history of human culture how works belonging to one literature are sometimes lost in their original language, but are preserved in another. Corresponding to the instances cited above, there are a number of Arabic works which are now preserved in Latin translations only. Not much of Kindi's work, for instance, has survived in its original form; but a good deal is still extant in Latin translations made by Gerardi of Cremona and others. His

IMPORTANCE OF THE ARABIC LANGUAGE  
FOR UNIVERSAL HISTORY

The Arabic language is also very important for purposes of Universal History. The subject of history, as is well known, furnishes one of the most copious departments of Arabic literature. It was, in fact, the last branch of that literature to wither away for want of proper cultivation. The Arabs have always had a great penchant for historical narrative; and the vast extent of the literature they produced in this field may be gauged from the fact that when the indefatigable Wüstenfeld made a survey of the Arabic historians who had flourished during the first thousand years of Islam, in his well-known work *Die Geschichtsscheiber der Araber und ihre Werke* (Göttingen, 1882), the total number of the authors noted by him came up to 590. Many of these historians are credited with numerous works, each of a colossal magnitude. The importance of Arabic historical literature does not, however, lie merely in its vast bulk. What must be realized in this connection is the fact that the history of the Arabs is not the history of an ordinary people. In the Middle Ages, they were the ruling nation of the

*Optica*, preserved in a Latin translation, influenced Roger Bacon and other Western savants. So is the case with the writings ascribed to Jābir b. Ḥayyān. Similarly, al-Khwārizmī's work on the Indian method of calculation was translated into Latin by Abelard of Bath in the 12th century, and has survived as *De Numero Indico*, whereas the Arabic original is lost. India provides a parallel case. There are a number of religious books relating to Buddhism, which are lost in the original Pali, but are still preserved in Chinese and Tibetan translations, which were made at the time when Buddhism was introduced from India into China and Tibet.

world and the pioneers of progress, who inherited and carried on the traditions of ancient cultures (Greek, Persian and Indian), and ultimately transmitted them, with rich additions of their own, to Mediæval Europe, and thus paved the way for modern civilization. No universal history can, therefore, be said to be complete, which does not do proper justice to the important rôle they played as the leading nation of the world and the vanguard of civilization for several centuries. And here comes in the importance of the Arabic language; for the chief literary sources for the political and cultural history of the Arabs are in this language, the knowledge of which is consequently indispensable for a thorough and first-hand study of the subject.

Moreover, the Arabic writers have not only preserved a full record of their own history, as few other nations have done, but their chronicles also shed valuable light on the life of the neighbouring peoples, who came in contact with them. We may cite, as an instance, al-Birūnī's *Tārīkh al-Hind*, which gives an authoritative account of the religion, philosophy, literature, chronology, astronomy, legal and social institutions, manners and customs of India as they existed about the year 1030 A.C. What patient research in Arabic sources can reveal is again well illustrated by J. T. Reinaud's admirable *Mémoire sur l'Inde* (Paris, 1949). Similarly, several Russian Orientalists have gleaned from Arabic literary sources valuable information, concerning the peoples and races who lived on the northern borders of the Arab Empire.

The above considerations will, I hope, enable us

to appreciate the remark of the famous German historian, Leopold von Ranke, who has observed that, leaving aside Latin, Arabic is the most important of all the languages of the world for purposes of universal history. The remarks of the late Professor Robert Flint, in his *Philosophy of History*, are also pertinent to the subject in hand. He writes, "It must not be forgotten that during the Middle Ages there existed a Mohammedan as well as a Christian civilisation, and a Mohammedan as well as a Christian historiography....The Christian mediæval world was only a part of the mediæval world, and a part imperfectly intelligible without acquaintance with its Mohammedan counterpart and complement. It may be safely affirmed that all our universal histories, histories of civilisation, and philosophies of history, suffer from their authors' defective knowledge of the history of Mohammedanism. Probably, no class of scholars have it in their power to increase more the stock of generally useful historical knowledge than those who are qualified to appreciate and utilise the Arabic historians. The histories of Mohammedan countries in the Middle Ages have been as fully recorded by Mohammedan annalists as those of the various regions of Christendom during the same period; and consequently, a knowledge of the former as exact and ample as of the latter is recoverable, and may equally be made to enter into the common inheritance of educated mankind."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Robert Flint, *History of the Philosophy of History*, pp. 78-79. Edinburgh and London, 1893.

THE IMPORTANCE OF ARABIC FOR  
THE HISTORY OF SCIENCE

The Arabic language is, likewise, important for the history of science. The history of the origin, development and progress of science in general and of its various branches has in recent times become a very important branch of study, in which abundant and highly instructive results have been achieved. But, unfortunately, most of the histories of science written by Western writers of to-day are vitiated by the fact that they do not pay adequate attention to the contributions made by the Arabs to various sciences. This is partly due to their ignorance and partly to their indifference. It is also due to the circumstance that the scientific literature in Arabic has not been fully studied, though a good beginning has been made in several directions.

Now, it is a well-ascertained historical fact that the Arabs proved themselves very apt pupils of the Greeks and other ancient civilized peoples. They not only preserved the medical, natural and mathematical sciences as handed down by the ancients, but also cultivated them further and on many points developed them to a very considerable extent.<sup>1</sup> They kept alive the study of sciences as a part of the higher intellectual life, in an age when the Christian

<sup>1</sup> For a concise and authoritative statement of the scientific achievements of the Arabs, see Carra de Vaux, *Les Penseurs de l'Islam*, vols. i and ii (Paris, 1921-22) and *The Legacy of Islam*, edited by Sir Thomas Arnold and Prof. Alfred Guillaume (Oxford, 1931). The student may also consult with much profit to himself the Italian savant, Aldo Mieli's *La Science Arabe* (Leyden, 1938), which besides giving an authoritative summary of the whole subject, is exceedingly rich in bibliographical references.

West was desperately fighting against barbarism. "The zenith of their activity may be placed in the ninth and tenth centuries; but it was continued down to the fifteenth. From the twelfth century, everyone in the West who had any taste for science, some desire for light, turned to the East or to the Moorish West. At this period the works of the Arabs began to be translated, as those of the Greeks had previously been by them. The Arabs thus form a bond of union, a connecting link between ancient culture and modern civilization. When at the Renaissance the spirit of man was once again filled with the zeal for knowledge and stimulated by the spark of genius, if it was able to set promptly to work, to produce and to invent, it was because the Arabs had preserved and perfected various branches of knowledge, kept the spirit of research alive and eager, and maintained it pliant and ready for future discoveries."<sup>1</sup> No history of science can, therefore, be regarded as complete which fails to take into account the scientific achievements of the Arabs.

But the Arab contributions to science cannot be properly and satisfactorily studied without a knowledge of Arabic, which holds the key to the vast scientific literature of the Muslims. Not only the Arabs but other peoples also who were associated with them in building up the composite Islamic culture wrote in Arabic for religious, philosophical and scientific purposes. Al-Fārābī and Ibn Sīnā were Turks by origin; but their principal works on philosophy, medicine and music were written in Arabic. Similarly, Omar Khayyām who is famous

<sup>1</sup> Baron Carra de Vaux in *The Legacy of Islam*, p. 377 (Oxford, 1931).

all over the world as a Persian poet, wrote his Algebra in Arabic. As a consequence, Arabic which had already been the imperial language of the Muslim Empire, also became the language of science and culture and, in course of time, the depository of all that the best brains in the Muslim world thought and wrote for centuries.

Johann Beckmann, who wrote a history of inventions, refers to the scientific achievements of the Arabs and to the importance of Arabic in this connection in the following words: "What a noble people were the Arabs. We are indebted to them for a great deal of knowledge and many inventions of great utility; and we should have still more to thank them for, were we fully aware of the benefits we have received from them. What a pity that their works should be suffered to moulder into dust, without being made available to us; what a shame that those conversant with their rich language should meet with so little encouragement. Had I still twenty years to live and could hope for an abundant supply of Arabic works, I would gladly learn Arabic."<sup>1</sup>

It was not given to Beckmann to realize his ambition of learning Arabic as a linguistic equipment for the study of the scientific inventions and discoveries of the Arabs. A contemporary scholar, however, has been more fortunate in this respect—I mean Dr. George Sarton, the well-known editor of *Isis* and the author of *An Introduction to the History of Science*, which is a monument of patient industry

<sup>1</sup> Johann Beckmann, *Beiträge zur Geschichte der Erfindungen*. English translation in Bohn's Library.

and vast erudition.<sup>1</sup> This Belgian savant, who has since the last Great War been settled at Harvard in the United States of America, in the course of his researches into the history of the various sciences, became increasingly conscious of the fact that he could not do justice to the Mediæval period in particular, without possessing a first-hand knowledge of Arabic. He felt so strongly convinced of this that he went to Syria to improve his Arabic, stayed there for about a year; and on his return he wrote, as a kind of by-product, a paper on the study and teaching of Arabic, which contains many thoughtful observations and useful suggestions on the subject.<sup>2</sup> All the modern scholars who have devoted themselves to the historical and technical study of the scientific progress in Mediæval Islam, such as Emmanuel Sedillot, (d. 1832), Amelie Sedillot (d. 1875), Clement-Mullet (d. 1869), Lucien Leclerc (d. 1893), Heinrich Suter (d. 1922), Carl Schoy (d. 1925), Eilhard Wiedemann (d. 1928), Carlo Nallino (d. 1938), Julius Ruska, Paul Kraus, Max Meyerhof, John Holmyard, and George Farmer—have possessed a good knowledge of the Arabic language.

#### ARABIC IN RELATION TO OTHER ISLAMIC LANGUAGES

The Arabic language also possesses supreme importance, though in a varying degree, for the study

<sup>1</sup> Two volumes of this important and admirable work have already appeared (Baltimore, 1927, 1932).

<sup>2</sup> George Sarton, *Remarks on the Study and Teaching of Arabic*. Reprint (15 pages). Princeton, 1933.



of most of the subsidiary languages of Islam, such as Persian, Turkish, Urdu, Swahili, etc. No thorough study of these languages and of the literatures enshrined in them, is possible without a knowledge of Arabic language and literature. These languages have not only adopted the Arabic script, but have also borrowed a large part of the Arabic vocabulary. The language of every people who embraced Islam was inundated from the first by Arabic words, first the technical terms of theology and jurisprudence, then the terminology of all the nascent sciences known to the Muslim civilization, and lastly a mass of ordinary words, which have often entirely displaced the native equivalents.

The Arabic literature has also more or less profoundly influenced the forms of literary expression throughout the Islamic world. "It is certain that no satisfactory knowledge of the languages, literatures and modes of thought of Persia, Turkey, Muhammadan India or any other Muslim land is possible without a considerable knowledge of Arabic, and that our appreciation and enjoyment of these literatures grows in direct ratio to this knowledge."<sup>1</sup>

#### RELATIONS OF ARABIC AND PERSIAN

The influence of Arabic has been particularly profound upon Persian language and literature. When the Arabs conquered Persia in the seventh century, deep and lasting changes gradually took place alike in the religion, the language, the literature, the life and thought of the Persians. In the pregnant words of

<sup>1</sup> Prof. E. G. Browne in his *Literary History of Persia*, vol. ii, p. 8.

Nöldeke, "Hellenism never touched more than the surface of Persian life; but Iran was penetrated to the core by Arabian religion and Arabian ways." During the two centuries immediately succeeding the Arab invasion, the language of the conquerors was almost the sole literary medium employed in Persia; and even afterwards it still remained the language of theology, philosophy and science, and to a large extent also of diplomacy, polite society and *belles-lettres*. The renaissance of Persian letters, therefore, perforce took place under the dominant influence of Arabic literary forms and conventions. The Persians gave up the old Pahlvi script, and adopted in its place the Arabic writing. The Arabic influence, though strongest in theology and jurisprudence, extended also to grammar, rhetoric, prosody, and all the sciences known to Muslims. The Persian poets not only borrowed ideas from Arabic poets, but also modes of expressions and metres, which were current among the latter; while the language of the poets as well as that of the prose-writers was inundated with Arabic words and phrases.<sup>1</sup>

Modern Persian thus emerged and its literary forms developed under the direct and dominant influence of Arabic literature. A knowledge of Arabic language and literature is, therefore, indispensable for a proper understanding of the development of Persian literature and thought; and this is well illustrated by the personal experience of the late Professor

<sup>1</sup> See in this connection the admirable monograph of Dr. U. M. Daudpota, *The Influence of Arabic Poetry on the Development of Persian Poetry* (Bombay, 1934), wherein the learned author has successfully and convincingly shown, with numerous examples, the multiplicity of ideas and literary forms borrowed by Persian poets from Arabic poets.

E. G. Browne, who thus writes in his *Literary History of Persia* (vol. i, p. 90) : "I began my Oriental studies with Turkish, and was soon driven to Persian, since from the Persians the Turks borrowed their culture and literary forms. Soon I found that without a knowledge of the Arabic language and literature and of the Arabian civilization and culture, one could never hope to be more than a smatterer in Persian." The Persians are fully conscious of the truth contained in the observation of Professor Browne ; for we find that Arabic is studied as a compulsory secondary language in all Persian schools.

Since the Persians have used the Arabic language as a medium of literary expression, especially during the earlier centuries of Arab rule, a knowledge of the Arabic language is necessary for anyone who desires to acquaint himself at first-hand with the spiritual and intellectual manifestations of that talented race. To ignore the Arabic writings of Persian authors would be to ignore some of the most important and characteristic manifestations of the Persian genius. A knowledge of Arabic is, therefore, necessary for the study of the literature and intellectual history of the Persians ; so that in the principal universities of the world, students who are without a good working knowledge of Arabic, are not considered qualified to undertake higher Persian studies.

Although after several centuries of Arab domination, the Persians succeeded in reasserting their national independence, their language had become so thoroughly permeated with Arabic words that it could never divest itself of these elements, which by long usage and familiarity had become a part and

parcel of it. It is astonishing to find what a large number of Arabic words are in current use in Persian; and to write Persian devoid of any admixture of Arabic is at least as difficult as to write English without employing Greek, Latin or French derivatives. It can be done within certain limits; but the result is generally incomprehensible without the aid of a dictionary.<sup>1</sup>

A movement has been afoot in present-day Persia in the garb of nationalism to efface, as far as possible, all traces of Arab influence from the various spheres of national life. It also seeks, as a part of its programme, to purge the Persian language of Arabic elements. This part of the programme does not, however, seem to have succeeded to any considerable extent. The movement, the real strength of which has been variously estimated by various observers, may have produced in the sphere of literature curiosities like *Nāma-i-Khusrawān* of Prince Jalāl, which, owing to the forced employment of obsolete and little-known words of Persian origin, is hardly intelligible even to an average literate Persian;<sup>2</sup> but the movement does not appear to have otherwise achieved any solid results. If we take up a Persian periodical, journal or book, not specially written by a contemporary propagandist or a nationalist crank, we shall find that the proportion of Arabic words used in it is as large as ever.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Cf. E. G. Browne, *A Literary History of Persia*, vol. ii, pp. 5-6.

<sup>2</sup> It is a short history of pre-Islamic dynasties of Persia, published at Vienna in 1297 A.H. (1880 A.C.). There is also a lithographed reprint of it published at Lahore.

<sup>3</sup> A Literary Academy, which has recently come into existence under the auspices of the Government of Persia, under the name of *Farhangistān-i-*

## RELATIONS OF ARABIC AND TURKISH LANGUAGES

Like other languages of the Muslim peoples, Ottoman Turkish too has been deeply influenced by the Arabic language and the general Islamic cultural elements. The Turks, in the first instance, borrowed their culture and literary forms from the Persians: but since the Persian literature itself had developed under the direct influence of Arabic, Arabic vocabulary and literary forms passed over into Turkish through the medium of Persian. It has been estimated that the Arabic and Persian loan-words in the Turkish literary language are more than fifty per cent of its total current vocabulary.<sup>1</sup>

Under the Saljūq Turks of Asia Minor, literary works were written partly in Arabic and partly in Persian; while Arabic was predominant as the language of religion and higher education. Arabic was also used in inscriptions, legal documents, *waqf*-deeds and in correspondence with contemporary Muslim sovereigns. The influence of Persian was still greater: it was used at the courts of the Sultans and of various princes and nobles, for whom Persian poetry in particular had a special appeal.

The Ottoman Sultans, who came after the Saljūqs, were generous patrons of art and learning; while

*Irān*, with the object of preserving and promoting the Persian language, has however made some sensible suggestions for the replacement of some Arabic words by Persian words, which are equally familiar and intelligible. See in this connection, Prof. Dr. Muhammad Iqbal's valuable article, *Farhangistān-i-Irān*, in the *Oriental College Magazine* (Lahore) for May, 1942.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Maximilian Bittner, *Der Einfluss des Arabischen und Persischen auf das Türkische. Eine Philologische Studie.* Wien, 1900.

their viziers and nobles followed their example in the matter. Along with other literary activity, innumerable books on all subjects were translated from Arabic and Persian into Turkish. Arabic and Persian works naturally served the Turkish writers as literary models, and influenced them greatly in the choice of words and the formation of their literary style.

Owing to religious contacts and religious needs, Arabic influence was continuous and persistent in its operation throughout Turkish history. Islamic law had been in force in the Turkish Empire from its very beginnings. A knowledge of Arabic language was, therefore, necessary for anyone who wanted to study Muslim law (*Fiqh*) and get an appointment as a judge (*qāḍī*) or any other religious functionary. The Arabic influence grew still stronger, as the Turkish sovereignty spread southwards over the Arabic-speaking countries; and when Egypt was incorporated within the Turkish Empire in the reign of Sultan Salīm I the literary relations between Stambul and Cairo—which had become the intellectual centre of the Arabic world after the fall of Baghdad—became all the closer. A large number of Arabic scholars flocked to the Turkish capital, where they received munificent patronage, and which in consequence became a flourishing centre of Arabic learning. It is, therefore, no wonder that after centuries of ceaseless literary activity the libraries of Stambul are surprisingly rich in rare and unique Arabic manuscripts, the scientific value of which is beyond all compute.

The Turks themselves produced a number of

eminent Arabic scholars, such as Tāshköprü Zāde, the author of *Shaqā'iq al-Nu'māniya* and *Miftāḥ al-Sa'ādah*, Munajjim Bāshī, the author of *Jāmi' al-Duwal*, and Hāji Khalifa, the author of *Kashf al-Zunūn*, along with scores of other savants, whose Arabic works gained wide fame and currency throughout the Muslim world. Their names and the titles of their works will be found in Brockelmann's *Geschichte der arabischen Litteratur* and in the authoritative and comprehensive outline of Turkish literature, given by Köprülü Zāde Meḥmed Fu'ād, in the *Encyclopædia of Islam*, vol. iv, pp. 938-959.

Uighūr alphabet and language survived for some time from the pre-Islamic times among the Muslim Turks; but, owing to the adoption of many Arabic and Persian words and the general Islamic influence, the Uighūr alphabet gradually fell into disuse, and Arabic script took its place in the writing of the Turkish language. The Arabic alphabet came into use for writing <sup>Turkish</sup> Arabic at a fairly early period, as is evidenced by the Anatolian documents of the 13th century. The Turkish literature, produced during several centuries past, is therefore entirely in the Arabic script; and a knowledge of it is consequently necessary for anyone who desires to study it in its original form; for it is vain to expect that this vast literature can ever be transferred into the Latin script, which has been compulsorily introduced in Turkey by the Government law of November 1st, 1928.

The Turks, in their excess of reformist zeal, may abolish the Arabic script; but they cannot undo the work of centuries. The Arabic element in the Tur-

kish language is as large as ever. To take an example at random, out of the four words (*Türkiye Büyük Millet Meclisi*), inscribed above the Turkish National Assembly Hall at Ankara, two are Arabic.<sup>1</sup> It is highly significant of the deep and persistent influence of Arabic on Turkish life to note that during the period of *Tanzīmāt* (Reforms) in the last century, when European influence was most pronounced in all spheres of Turkish life, recourse was perforce had to the vast resources of the Arabic language in translating technical terms from French and other Western languages, with the result that whereas the national literature and life were being Europeanized in spirit and general outlook, the literary language itself was at the same time being enriched with words of Arabic provenance.

In view of these and other considerations, it will not perhaps be rash on our part to say that, if the extremists in the Turkish ranks succeeded in divesting themselves of Arabo-Islamic cultural elements, they would be left nothing more than the black tents, in which their rude ancestors came from the steppes of Central Asia. The late Professor Paul Casanova (*d.* 1926) relates in his Inaugural Lecture an anecdote told him by a Syrian gentleman, which admirably illustrates our point of view. An old Arab shaikh sat chatting one day in a *café* with a number of Turks. The latter were decrying the Arab race, exclaiming again and again: "The Arabs are a faithless people; they do not know what is

<sup>1</sup> For a photograph of the Turkish National Assembly, bearing the inscription referred to above, see the *Encyclopædia of Islam, Supplement*, opposite p. 22.



honour." The Arab shaikh calmly asked them: "What is the Turkish word for honour?" They replied: 'İrd (عِرْض), pronounced as eurz,—“Any other word?”—“No, we have no other word for honour.”—“No other word! But this word does not belong to you; it is one of the oldest words of our ancient language. If the Arabs do not know what honour is, then how about your ancestors, who never conceived the idea, when they were wandering in the deserts of Central Asia?”<sup>1</sup> The moral of the story is that whereas neither the Arabs nor the Turks are, in fact, without the sense of honour and self-respect, the Turks on entering the sphere of Islam were so completely surrounded by Arabo-Persian influences that they could not help drawing upon the current speech, which was saturated with words of Arabic origin, with the result that they forgot to a very considerable extent the characteristic vocabulary of their ancestors and adopted in its place Arabic equivalents, which bore the hall-mark of dignity and superior culture.

<sup>1</sup> Paul Casanova in his *Leçon d'ouverture*, 26 avril, 1909, printed in his booklet, *L'Enseignement de l'Arabe au Collège de France* (Paris, 1910). The above anecdote may be supplemented by the following amusing passage from D'Ohsson, *Tableau de l'Empire Ottoman* (p. 373): "Ceux qui ont prétendu que le mot d'honneur n'existe pas dans la langue des Othmans, n'ont prouvé que leur parfaite ignorance...Comment n'ont-ils pas connu les mots d'irz, de namouz (lire: namous), de schann, de scheuhreth qui repondent a ceux d'honneur, de dignité, de réputation, de considération?" —Now, all these four words are Arabic and not Turkish!

ARABIC ELEMENT IN THE ROMANCE  
LANGUAGES

The Arabs ruled over Spain for seven hundred years, held important centres of population in southern France for a long time and penetrated as far as the heart of France and the foot of the Alps mountains (Piedmont, Savoy, etc.). They also ruled over Sicily for two centuries, and occupied some parts of southern Italy (Brindisi, Bari and Tarente) for a considerable period. This long contact with Arab rule and Arab culture has naturally left a deep impress upon the languages of these countries. There are, accordingly, hundreds of Arabic words in the Romance languages (Spanish, Portuguese, Provençal, French and Italian); besides a large number of place-names (towns, villages, farms, castles, rivers, springs, etc.), which are evidently of Arabic origin. The borrowed Arabic words are in most cases nouns, which stand for ideas and objects (e.g., cotton, sugar, etc.), introduced by the Arabs. There is also a large number of loan-words, relating to the various sciences and arts, which the Arabs transmitted to Mediæval Europe. Nevertheless, the Romance words borrowed from Arabic include some of the commonest objects of daily life.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> For the Arabic element in the Romance languages in general, see W. Meyer-Lübke, *Einführung in das Studium der Romanischen Sprachwissenschaft* (3rd ed., Heidelberg, 1920); and for the different forms which individual Arabic words have assumed in the various Romance languages, consult the same author's *Romanisches Etymologisches Wörterbuch* (3rd ed., Heidelberg). For further detailed information, the student may refer to the following special dictionaries:—

(a) Spanish and Portuguese: R. Dozy and W. H. Engelmann, *Glossaire des mots espagnols et portugais dérivés de l'arabe*, 2nd ed. (Leiden 1869); D.L.

The influence of the Arabic language, however, is not confined to the Romance languages only; words of Arabic origin are found more or less in other European languages as well.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, the interest attaching to these borrowed words is not limited to the field of philology alone; they are of the highest import for the history of culture; for they indicate the objects and ideas introduced for the first time into Europe by the Arabs and remind us of the debt, often forgotten or only grudgingly acknowledged, which modern civilization owes to that gifted race.

### ARABIC LANGUAGE IN RELATION TO CHRISTIANITY AND THE CHRISTIANS

In view of the life-long connection of Islam with Arabic, which is the language of the Qur'ān, the sacred book of the Muslims, it may seem paradoxical

de Eguilaz, *Glosario etimológico de las palabras españolas de origen oriental* (Granada, 1886); C. Defremery, *Des mots espagnols et portuais dérivés de l'arabe*, in *J. Asiatique*, 1869; *Diccionario de la lengua española*, published by the Royal Academy of Spain, 15th ed. (Madrid, 1925); and Prof. J. B. Trend's chapter on 'Spain and Portugal' in *The Legacy of Islam* (Oxford, 1931).

(b) French: A. P. Pihan, *Dictionnaire étymologique des mots de la langue française dérivés de l'arabe, du persan ou du turc* (Paris, 1866); M. Devic, *Dictionnaire étymologique des mots française dérivés de l'arabe* (Paris, 1876), also re-published in *Supplément* to E. Littré's *Dictionnaire de la langue française* (Paris, 1923; and H. Lammens, *Remarques sur les mots française dérivés de l'arabe* (Beyrouth, 1890).

(c) Italian: F. Lasinio, *Delle voci italiane di origine orientale* (Florence, 1887); G. de Gregorio and Chr. F. Seybold, *Glossario delle voci siciliane di origine araba* (in *Studi glottologici italiani*), Palermo, 1903.

<sup>1</sup> See in this connection, W. Taylor, *Arabic Words in English* (Oxford, 1933); E. Littmann, *Morgenländische Wörter im Deutschen*, 2nd ed., pp. 59-102 (Tübingen 1924); and K. Lokotsch, *Etymologisches Wörterbuch der europäischen Wörter orientalischen Ursprungs* (Heidelberg, 1927).

—and yet it remains a historical fact—that the associations of this language with Christianity are older in point of time than with Islam; for Christianity had penetrated the Arabian Peninsula long before the rise of Islam, and the name of Jesus Christ was hallowed by the Arabs, before they learnt to revere that of Muḥammad; cf. the sermons of Quss b. Sā'idah, the Christian Bishop of Najran, which are still partly preserved in Arabic literature, as specimens of rare eloquence. Similarly, the Christian Arab poets gave expression to Christian ideas and sentiments in the Arabic tongue, before it became the primary and chief medium of Islamic doctrine and the principal vehicle of Islamic culture.<sup>1</sup>

The rise of Islam, it is true, put a stop to the spread of Christianity in the Peninsula; but it did not terminate the connection between Christians and the Arabic language. The historical events of the following centuries rather spread the use of Arabic among the Christians of the Near East; and ever since the early Arab conquests in Western Asia, when Syriac and other Aramaic dialects gave place to their kindred Arabic idiom, the Oriental Christian communities of the Near East have used Arabic as their everyday language, and during the last thousand years or so have produced in it a voluminous literature, both ecclesiastical and secular.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See in this connection the studies of Père Louis Cheikho, *La Christianisme et la littérature chrétienne en Arabie avant l'Islam* (3 parts, Bayrout, 1912-23), and *Les Poètes Arabes Chrétiens avant l'Islam* (6 fasc., Bayrout, 1890-1926).

<sup>2</sup> For a general survey of Christian-Arabic literature, see C. Brockelmann, *Die syrische und christlich-arabische Litteratur* (2nd ed., Leipzig, 1909); and A. Baumstark, *Das christlich-arabische Schrifttum*,

In the 10th century, the Melkite patriarch of Alexandria, Eutychius, known in Arabic as Sa'id bin al-Bitriq, wrote a history of the Christian Churches in Arabic under the title of *Naẓm al-Jawhar* (ed. Pococke at Oxford, 1658-59), as did also the Jacobite bishop, Severus ibn al-Muqaffa'. At the beginning of the 11th century, Elias bar Shinnaya, the learned metropolitan of Nisibis, wrote his book intended for his co-religionists either entirely in Arabic or in Arabic and Syriac, arranged in parallel columns. The Gospels were also translated by Christian scholars into Arabic at a fairly early date as is shown by the great antiquity of the manuscripts preserved at the Vatican. An important branch of the Christian-Arabic literature is formed by the Arabic writings of Christian apologists and polemicists, e.g. Ḥunain bin Ishāq, Abū 'Alī 'Isā bin Zurā'a, Yaḥyā bin 'Adī, Ibn 'Athāl, Daniāl bin al-Khaṭṭāb and others.<sup>1</sup> Some of their works, which possess a deep interest for students of religious history, have been published by Père Paul Sbath in his *Vingt traités philosophiques et apologetiques d'auteurs arabes chrétiens du IXe au XIVe siècle* (Cairo, 1929); while several Arabic works by Christian writers dealing with patriarchal and secular history (annals, chronicles, etc.) are co-

which forms a part of *Die christlichen Literaturen des Orients* (Sammlung, Göschen, Leipzig, 1911). Père Louis Cheikho enumerates 900 Christian authors, whose Arabic works have been preserved in manuscript in 41 different libraries of the world, in his *Les Manuscrits des auteurs arabes chrétiens depuis l'Islam* (Bayrout, 1924).

<sup>1</sup> For further details see M. Steinschneider, *Polemische und apologetische Literatur in arabischer Sprache zwischen Muslimen, Christen und Juden* (Leipzig, 1877).

